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Beatitudes
of the
Psalter

Arthur W. Jenks, D. D.



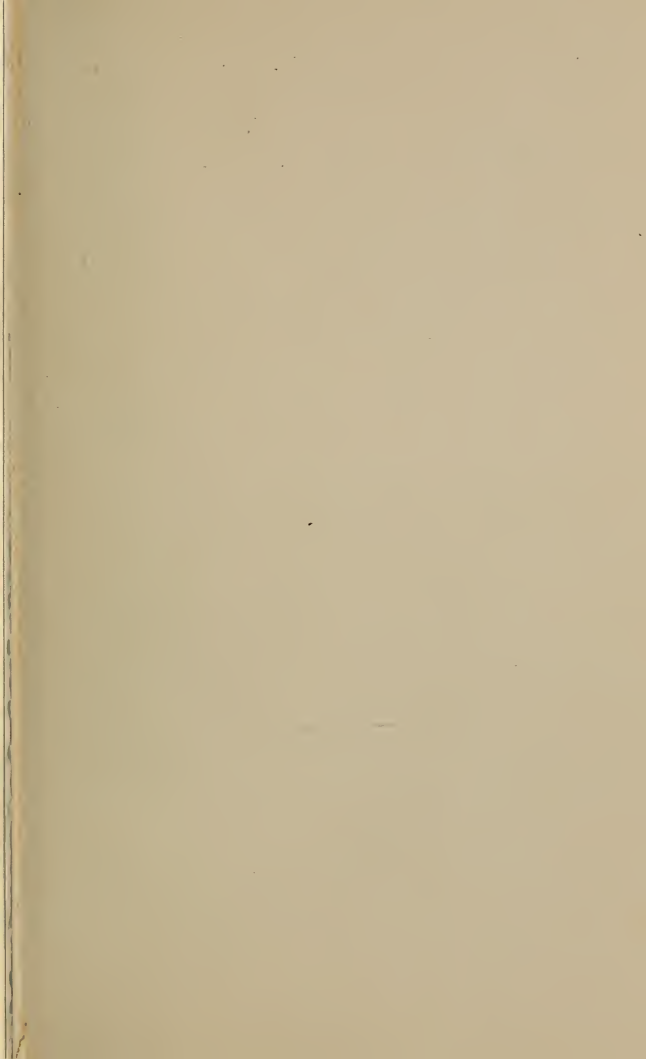
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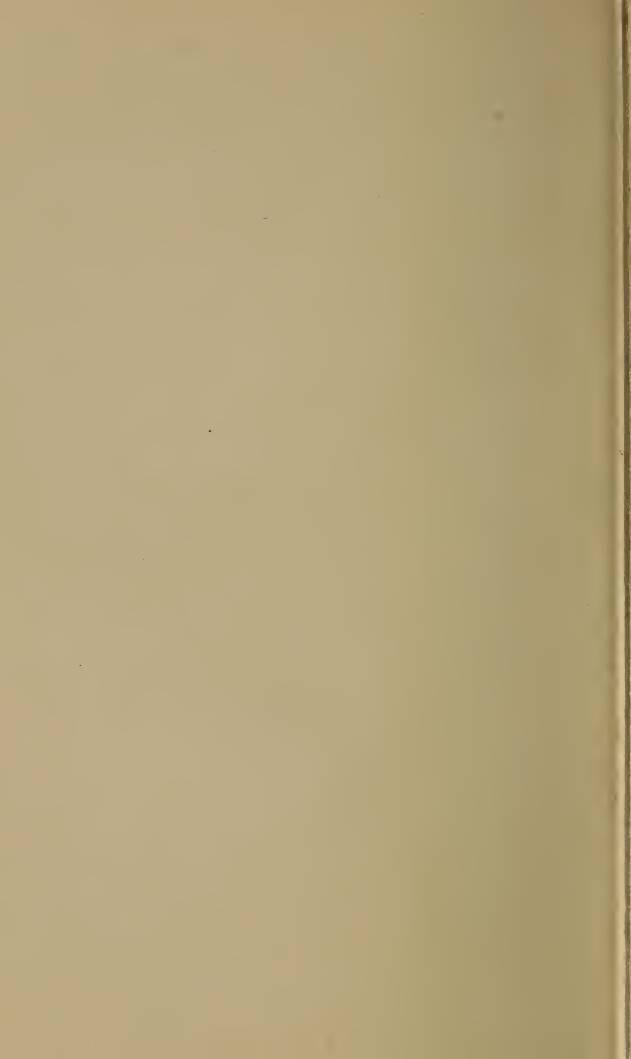
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Notes for Meditation

ON THE

Beatitudes of the Psalter

By

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**THE BEATITUDES OF
THE PSALTER**

THE BEATITUDES OF THE PSALTER

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS— WHAT IS BEATITUDE.

The Psalter begins with a Beatitude and ends with an Alleluia. If we think of the Psalms as a most marvelous portraying of human nature working out its expression on all possible sides and struggling towards the highest, truest and noblest ideals, we shall turn to them again and again in our penitence, in our aspirations, in some solemn season like Lent, or some time of voluntary retirement from the world such as a Retreat, or some experience of providential seclusion such as comes with bodily illness, and we shall find our life's condition set forth in the Psalms together with suggestions and methods

for passing out of one stage into another and higher. Above all we are able to find in the Psalms an approximation to the perfect man—the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, that which we long in our better moments to find reproduced in ourselves.

One helpful method of using these wonderful poems for our spiritual edification, the building ourselves up nearer perfection, is to trace one line of thought through the entire series of Psalms. Then we get not so much detached glimpses of beauties, but complete visions. We get something like constructive results in character building. The material is not merely gathered together but is put into some form. This is a highly desirable end to achieve. One of the common and disappointing aspects of Christian life today lies in the fact that so many rest content with admiring detached virtues and good qualities in the abstract, while they never go on or even seem to realize that

they ought to go on to reproduce this many-sided type of Christlikeness.

Now we find running through the poems of the Psalter, like a bright-colored thread through a fabric of many hues, a series of sayings like that series with which the Sermon on the Mount opens—a set of Beatitudes, or laws of happiness. And we find them expressed in the same striking phrase in English which represents both the words in the Sermon on the Mount and the meaning of the Psalmist. For the underlying principle of true happiness, or beatitude, is found in its constituting not a single experience, but a series of experiences which lead up to a state of life. As we place side by side the Beatitudes of the Gospel and of the Psalter we find some are parallel, as for example the opening of the 119th Psalm—"Blessed are those who are undefiled in the way," and our Lord's words—"Blessed are the pure in heart." Again, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy" may

be taken to correspond to the Gospel Beatitude—"Blessed are the merciful." But in other cases the Psalms and the Gospel approach the subject from stand-points peculiar to each. The general object, however, is the same,—to set forth the life of sanctity, the blessed life, as a diamond reflects from each of its facets the light of the sun. Each one of the members of Christ's Body who has entered into the state of fulfilling any part of the Divine Will reflects in his life some portion of the Divine Life, and so possesses a portion of perfect beatitude.

The Psalter begins with a Beatitude and ends with an Alleluia. Those who strive to imitate and reproduce all the Divine perfections, and who long to realize them all, will one day enjoy the Beatific Vision, and forever sing Alleluia to the Ever Blessed Trinity.

Let us just ask ourselves at the out-start what is to be understood by beatitude. Happiness and peace are

other terms which serve to express the ultimate outcome of beatitude, though the blessedness may be present, before the happiness is experienced or the peace attained. David the penitent "whose unrighteousness was forgiven and whose sin was covered" was blessed, but peace and happiness could not come with the recollection of the sins fresh upon him.

All these terms, however, indicate a "state of the soul which is conscious of the possession and enjoyment of the (perfect) good." Beatitude may also be described as a sharing in the Life Eternal. Happiness has reference to the perpetual and unlimited activity of the soul in the "service which is perfect freedom." Peace refers to the state of the soul wherein it is incapable of being disturbed or marred.

Some one has said that "to be happy the way is to set before you the good which God tells you to be really good, to pursue it with honest effort, to keep

down the unruly will which revolts from the Lord and His law, to mortify the deeds of the body, to give scope to the influences of the Spirit, to overcome the world."

Beatitude is the final end of man, and all seek it either by right or wrong methods. "To be blessed," says S. Chrysostom, "is so great a good that bad men and good men wish for it."

The full attainment of beatitude is never in this life. The road is the path of duty, followed with sacrifice and self-denial, with sad acknowledgment of infirmity and weakness and with continual dependence upon Divine strength. Duty may become a chastened pleasure and comparative peace, but beatitude full and final is attained only when the soul has passed through the grave and gate of death to a merciful judgment and joyful resurrection.

I.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF INTEGRITY.

"Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners: and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful.

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord."

PSALM I. 2, 3.

As we approach the consideration of these laws of spiritual happiness contained in the Psalms we should pray God to give us a great longing and hunger for beatitude, or the attainment of the perfect good, so that we may treat all the thoughts and monitions of the Holy Spirit as personal and practical and meant to advance for each one the growth in holiness.

Then we may remind ourselves in this connection as in our study of the Psalms in general and at all times that the heart and core of the Book as a

whole is the picture of the ideal and pattern man, the perfect fulfillment of which is found in Him Who was and is Perfect Man, and it is in Him that we may find the perfect realization and working out of each and all of the beatitudes. Thus these beatitudes in the Psalms are simply one way in which we are called to the imitation of Christ. This call to follow His example the Christian Church supplements by giving us power to do so in the sacramental life of the Church, and this empowering is the distinctive application of the truth and religion of the Word-made-flesh.

For the sake of vividness in the carrying out of these principles it is helpful in approaching each of these beatitudes, as in general it is helpful in the practice of Meditation, to try to picture our Lord at some moment of His earthly life so situated and acting as to exemplify the truth set forth.

To aid us in the interpretation and application of these opening words of

the first Psalm, let us represent our Lord towards the end of His earthly life and ministry boldly challenging the Jews in Jerusalem—"Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" This is an assertion of *moral integrity*, the state of righteousness in outward relations to others. There is no flaw or weakness in the "armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left," nothing to be feared from the testing that comes "by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report." There is found nothing at which others can cavil and sneer and say his life is an inconsistent one.

Now turn to the Psalm with which the Psalter opens, and notice

I. THE STATE OF INTEGRITY.

Three lines of conduct have been avoided—conforming to worldly maxims as the deciding counsel, "hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly;" dallying with temptation, "stood in the

way of sinners;" settling down to a disregard of right, "sat in the seat of the scornful." These three lines of conduct may be expressed in another way as sinning against *light*, *love* and *grace*. All too abundant illustrations are forthcoming of these attitudes. Neglecting prayer, meditation or any form of deliberate thinking on holy subjects, including devotional study of Holy Scripture, which many people warmly champion theoretically and neglect practically—these are examples of sinning against light. He sins against love who refuses to fight temptation, and to let the cross of self-denial and self-discipline enter into his life, for the Cross is the very summing up of Divine Love. Showing "despite unto the Spirit of grace," or sinning against grace, is intimately connected with the neglect of such means of strengthening the weak will as God has given us in the channels through which Divine strength or grace is bestowed, chiefly the Sacraments.

On the other hand, the positive side of this blessed state of integrity is seen in the cheerful acceptance and adoption of God's Will as the law of conduct, and that not as a choice made by compulsion, and adopted as the barest minimum, but with "delight in the law of the Lord," and with persevering attempts to sound the depths of its meaning. Such a state is that of those who are not content to keep the negative precepts of the Mosaic law, but aim at the positive law of Love. Whoever is in this state will frequent the House of God and the Sacraments, rather than be satisfied with a rule of once a Sunday or once a month with no ideal of growth and of mounting step by step towards that which will be the experience of the future life and may be in a measure realized here and now, daily worship and intercourse with God.

II. THE BEATITUDE WHICH RESULTS.

First, there is *growth and development*. "He shall be like a tree planted by the

waterside." More joy is found in prayer, time spent in meditating on Divine things becomes a satisfaction, sacrifice and self-denial become an atmosphere of life in which strength is inhaled, the Bread of Life and the Water of Life are continual nourishment which meets the cravings of the soul. Here is an excess of blessedness plain to perceive, akin to that of which our Lord speak when he declares—"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Then there is *fruit*. Something comes of this growth. There will be the appearance of some virtue, some fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, meekness, gentleness, goodness, as the result of growth and nourishment. Such fruit will be a thing of beauty.

Again, there is *vigor*, hardiness of life. "His leaf shall not wither and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Has our Lord's life and example become weaker with the lapse of the centuries? No

more shall the life that is lived in the power of His life and in imitating His integrity cease to be an inspiration and a power.

III. HOW TO GAIN THIS BEATITUDE.

No path is surer to lead to happiness of the kind asserted by the Psalmist than that of *paying careful heed to the positive duties of our religion*. We mean such matters as daily prayer, regular communions, sincere self examination, deliberate and carefully planned giving of time and money for the work of Christ's Kingdom. Many of us are so thoughtless, careless, spasmodic and impulsive.

Beware of ignoring counsel. The Church in her advice and warnings, in the ordinary round of teaching is continually affording us just the healthful stimulus and reminders that we need for our ordinary daily Christian life. It is exceedingly dangerous and eventually disastrous to throw all this counsel

aside in an easy-going way, to "sit in the seat of the scornful."

We need to have a horror of getting settled into a habit of laxity. It is the lukewarmness of Laodicæa, the negative condition which in all ages of the Christian Church has called forth unsparing condemnation when it has characterized large sections of the Christian body, and lay back of those reactions in the early centuries which lead to "unhappy divisions" in the Church of S. Cyprian and S. Augustine, and which similarly so disturbed the Wesleys as to lead them to their ill-advised attitude and finally to separation. In the individual this laxity always undermines spiritual strength and vigor. It may result in a sort of drowsy, apathetic placidity, but never in active, joyous happiness.

"The happiness here spoken of," says Fr. Benson, "is not a high aim which the few may seek, and even they can only seek in vain. It is the law of life

by which we are hereafter to be judged. Therefore they who have not sought happiness here in the law of the Lord cannot receive happiness hereafter from the Lord."

II.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PARDONED PENITENT.

"Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven: and whose sin is covered."

PSALM XXXII. 1.

This Psalm is one of that wonderful group called the Penitential Psalms. Nevertheless it sings the joy, the happiness of one who has passed through the valley of the shadow of sin which is the real death, and has entered the sunlight of God's renewed favour.

We may place before our minds our Lord, the sinless Penitent, bearing the sins of the whole race on the Cross, and uttering the cry: "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and then the utterance of relief—"It is finished." Also we may think of our Lord as the great Absolver, saying to the penitent—

“Thy sins be forgiven thee: go and sin no more.”

I. THE STATE OF PARDON.

We are told that S. Augustine often read this Psalm weeping, and before his death had it written upon the wall where he could see it from his sick-bed. It presents to us the condition of relief from an overwhelming and crushing burden.

The fifty-first Psalm shows us the soul bowed down under the load of sin and is a cry for mercy. The thirty-second Psalm is the outburst of the soul from which the burden has been removed and is a cry of chastened, thankful joy.

Four aspects of this state are mentioned. Transgression, or disloyalty, is set aside as no longer the unhappy relationship between the soul and its King—“whose unrighteousness is forgiven.” Sin, or error, is no longer at hand to be gazed upon—“whose sin is covered.” The moral default depravity is removed—“the Lord imputeth no sin.”

The guilt of deceit, or insincerity, no longer tinges and conditions the soul's activity—"in whose spirit there is no guile." The lust of David, the pride of S. Peter, the cowardice of S. John, the ignorant hatred of Saul of Tarsus, each and all are gone; they do not exist. The handwriting of the ordinance that was against them is blotted out. Think of all the strong figurative expressions used in Holy Scripture to set forth the completeness of the forgiven state—cleansing, imparting righteousness, absolving, taking away a burden, reconciliation. All these and other expressions emphasize the completeness of changed relationship, viewed from all sides, and imply healing, rehabilitation, renewed freedom from the entanglements of the past, intrinsic righteousness.

II. THE BEATITUDE OF THE STATE OF FORGIVENESS.

As the soul stands conscious of God's presence and scrutiny there is nothing

to hide, nothing to explain, nothing to preclude friendship. Adam and Eve hid from the face of God in the misery of concealed and unacknowledged sin. They could not continue in communion with a Being Who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The happiness of restoration to favour is deep and entrancing. We can look up, we can go forward, we can work. The health of the soul is renewed; prayer is practicable; sight and knowledge are again ours. The soul is light, free, eager to assimilate the high and exacting truths of revelation. It can believe. Sin unrepented of and unpardoned is the great foe to faith. Thanksgiving is the exhilarating air that the forgiven soul breathes. O the blessedness of him whose unrighteousness is forgiven!

It is not too much to say that the attainment of this especial beatitude has been the conscious object for which countless souls have striven, and which lies back of the sacrificial and pro-

pitiatory systems of so many religions. And with all done that could be suggested as likely to appease an outraged deity, and with all the ceremonial washings and purifications that could be devised nothing was found comparable to the washing their robes and making them white in the Blood of the Lamb, the efficacy of whose blood-shedding lies in the mysterious truth that the Lamb of God is God, and so His Blood has infinite efficacy. He Himself has borne the eternal penalty of sin. He made "peace through the blood of His Cross" and to extend that reconciliation "sanctified water to the mystical washing away of sin." Mystical but none the less real is the washing of the Sacrament of cleansing, Holy Baptism, which along with the Ministry of Reconciliation for sins committed after Baptism, has been the means whereby

Laden souls by thousands meekly stealing,
Kind Shepherd turn their weary steps to Thee.

III. HOW THIS BEATITUDE IS AT- TAINED.

This state of happiness is entered upon only by the sorrowful path of contrition, or sorrow for sin as against God, by confession, or the putting of the specific acts or habits into the expression of words, and accompanied by determination to amend. All three are requisite in some degree, or manner. We would gladly let ourselves off with one or the other, but somehow the happiness does not come until quite humbly we have passed through all three of these stages, and in the right order. How can the life be spiritually healthy so long as the old disease is still working, even though we determine not to break any more the laws which our failure to keep has brought on the disease? How can we say we are sorry for our misdeeds so long as we will not determine to forsake them? And how can we expect to have a disease

diagnosed and cured, if we will not go to the physician and admit that the disease exists?

Let us not deceive ourselves on another point. Attrition, or the sorrow for sin as it affects ourselves, may be a minimum sufficient to bring us to confession and determination to amend, but contrition or the sorrow for sin as disobedience to a wise, loving, tender and merciful Being—"Against Thee only have I sinned"—is what we aim at experiencing. And contrition is not perfect when there is only a turning from sin to self, but when there is a turning from self to God; not only—"I will arise" but, "I will arise and go unto my father."

Contrition contains an element of love, and that element of love remains, as a part of the happiness of the penitent, even when the sin has been forgotten. The soul loved so much that it could not be happy until it had told in its own words what was wrong and for very

love promised obedience to the Will of the Beloved One.

“Contrition is the moulding and controlling force that forms, restores and preserves the penitent. Its transforming power is so great that it can fit the greatest sinner for the company of the Saints. The Magdalen was not out of place beside the spotless Mother.”

Before we emerge from a Retreat, or come to the end of a season such as Lent, or when we are preparing to take some such great step as Ordination, there should be present as a sign of sincerity the resolve to experience the blessedness of being absolved, so that we may come free and unhampered to the new period of life or the new work which God opens out before us. Accordingly there must be an effort towards fullest confession, deepest sorrow, strongest determination to do better.

“O great Absolver, grant my soul may wear
The lowliest garb of penitence and prayer,
That in the Father’s courts my glorious dress
May be the garment of Thy righteousness.”

III.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF VOCATION

"Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and receivest unto Thee."

PSALM LXV. 4.

The Psalm from which this Beatitude is taken is thought to have been used at the Passover commemoration, when the wave-sheaf of the first-fruits was offered. And this gives a strong Messianic interpretation to the passage before us, for we remember that the Resurrection took place the third day after the Passover, when the first-fruits were presented to God. Our Risen Lord was "the first-fruits of them that slept." The work which He had come to perform was complete with His rising from the dead.

The Psalm is also often and fittingly selected for a Harvest Home festival,

because it praises God for crowning the efforts of man in his labours with plenteousness. Work undertaken in the natural order is the subject.

This Beatitude, then, brings before us the blessedness of vocation, and we may represent our Lord in His youth saying—"Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

I. RESPONSE TO VOCATION.

The state of one who has responded to the call to a distinct work or life is presented to us in this Psalm—"Blessed is the man whom Thou choolest, and receivest unto Thee: he shall dwell in Thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy House, even of Thy holy temple."

The state of such a soul is not by any manner of means enviable from one standpoint. The life of full response to vocation is not an easy life. It is most difficult, if one really means to attain the perfection of the life for which he

has been chosen. It means daily renunciation, discipline, humiliations, peculiar and special temptations, absence of certain alleviations which in other walks of life may be used. This is true of the Priesthood, of the Religious Life, and of the Christian life everywhere, considered as a special vocation.

Monotony, separation, inability to change about at one's will, the gradual drifting away from others who are called in a different direction—all these constitute a peculiar trial. Our Lord must preach only to the Jews and the mass of them were unreceptive of His real message. He must put up with the Twelve who were often so disappointing. He must go on unremittingly with His labours and meet with failure, and He knew that things would narrow themselves more and more until He was left to face His enemies and His judges alone. Yet His response to the Will of the Father was complete.

Special vocations are likely to present

just these aspects, and it is largely on this account that Christians so continually put aside the suggestion that they may be divinely called to a particular sphere of activity, or a certain state of life. There is at the present time an inadequate, pitifully inadequate, number of clergy to supply the demand for the extension of the Kingdom. Few seem to consider the question of vocation to Religious Life in the Orders and Communities for men and women. There is a great and growing need for laymen who will devote themselves to certain lines of parochial and missionary activity which can be done just as well by laymen as by ordained men and which overburden the clergy and drain their strength. It is very likely to be explained by the fact that in all these special vocations the call is not to individual success and the exploiting of personal gifts so as to win the tribute of applause and congratulation from people in general, but a call to sink one's own work in the work of

the Church as a body, to experience the toil, the criticism, the disappointment of unseen results, and to let the glory, the praise, the success be ascribed to God alone.

The difficulty very likely lies in assuming that there is no joy in such special vocations. Let us turn to that point.

II. THE BEATITUDE OF VOCATION.

To the question, wherein lies the happiness, we may find an answer by considering side by side with this Beatitude another which is expressed in the fortieth Psalm—"Blessed is the man that hath set his hope in the Lord." This is contained in one of the Passion Psalms, the burden of the Psalm being the Sacrifice of the Will. "Lo I come to do Thy Will, O Lord; I am content to do it: yea, Thy law is within My heart." That is the secret, the response and conformity of the most wayward, rebellious, and the weakest part of our being in most of us—the Will.

"I worship thee, sweet Will of God!
And all thy ways adore,
And every day I live I seem
To love thee more and more.

Thou wert the end, the blessed rule
Of our Saviour's toils and tears;
Thou wert the passion of His Heart
Those three and thirty years.

And He hath breathed into my soul
A special love of Thee,
A love to lose my will in His,
And by that loss be free.

Man's weakness waiting upon God
Its end can never miss,
For men on earth no work can do
More angel-like than this.

He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost;
God's Will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.

Ill that He blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet Will."

Here, then, lies the secret of beatitude in response to vocation. It is the will to do God's Will, as He wills, when He wills, and so long as He wills. It is safe to say that the steady, persistent, plausible setting before the minds of the young at the most critical stage of awakening thoughtfulness of the false ideas of success and the selfish outlook upon life, the omission of which the Church today is reaping the fruits to teach vocation to the Priesthood and the Religious Life clearly and definitely in our Church schools and in our parishes, has obscured most completely all idea of asking the momentous question—"Lord, *what wilt Thou have me to do?*"

III. HOW TO OBTAIN THIS BEATITUDE.

We are to be content, instead of restless. "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." The misery and unhappiness of work come frequently from self-will and low motives in choosing our

work, and so getting into a niche we were never meant to occupy and cannot fill. God's answer to our prayer to make known His choice is generally to be found in allowing the life to be shaped step by step according to His providence and under the guidance of His Church. The special vocation is sure to emerge in an environment which makes the ear quick to hear and the eye to see. On the other hand today parents, friends, educators, with worldly ambitions and standards, all have the weight with those who have to respond to God's call, so that often there is ignorance that He can and does call.

Was S. Paul unhappy when he wrote those triumphant words to Timothy—"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness?" "The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground, yea, I have a goodly heritage" is the state of mind of those who have conformed to the known Will of God, and have followed His guidance even when it seemed

inexplicable. Take it all in all, there are not any classes of men who so generally are characterized by Christian Joy, as are Priests and Religious.

There is a widespread need that Christian people shall stop speaking of the Christian life as though it were a gloomy, miserable sort of life which we only undertake as a necessary penalty for desiring happiness hereafter. And likewise there should be a denial continually and decidedly of any such travesty of the Priesthood and other special vocations as make those so called appear as objects of pity. It is not so. The promise holds good—"He shall dwell in Thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy House, even of Thy holy temple."

IV.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF WORSHIP AND SERVICE

*"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy House;
they will be alway praising Thee."*

PSALM LXXXIV. 4.

Let us represent to ourselves our Lord frequenting His Father's House—at His Presentation, at the age of twelve, and throughout His earthly Ministry. Remember that the Temple service was a service of worship and prayer, both strongly objective. He dwelt in the House of God's special Presence.

This Psalm belongs to a group, ascribed to the Sons of Korah, and characterized especially by acts and words of direct adoration. They celebrate the Church, her worship, and her sacred rites. The new setting for them

is found in the worship of the Christian Church patterned after the Vision of S. John of the worship of heaven where the Lamb upon the Altar-throne is the centre of worship and adoration. The forty-second and forty-third Psalms have been associated with the Sacrament of the Altar as Eucharistic, the forty-fifth speaks of external things in the beauty of worship, and the eighty-seventh is in praise of the Church.

The Psalm before us speaks of the House, the Altar, the Courts, the offices of devotion. It ends with a burst of joyful recognition of the blessedness of those who trust in God rather than in the world. Liturgically, it belongs to the office of the Priest's preparation for offering the Holy Sacrifice, also to the Proper Psalms for the feasts of the Purification and the Transfiguration, while others of the same group belong to Christmas and Epiphany. The interpretation is very plain of the worship of God in the Church material, the

Church Catholic, and before the Altar in the Eucharistic Presence.

I. The state is that of one for whom the House of God, with all that belongs to it of the realization of the nearness, protection, and personal indwelling and communion, is the very heart and core of life.

Think of the significance of the language used:—"they that *dwell* in Thy House"; "how amiable (i.e. lovable) are Thy dwellings"; "my soul hath a *desire* and *longing* to enter"; "my heart and flesh rejoice in the *living* God.

We enter the Church and come before the Altar for *worship* which gives reality to our faith; for *contemplation* , in seclusion from the world of our ordinary affairs, whereby we advance in a knowledge of spiritual things; for *obtaining grace* which is the life of the soul.

We cannot expect to find this state in that attitude which associates Church-going with a conventional side of re-

ligion, or which looks upon public worship merely as a duty performed in order to be diverted, or religiously thrilled, or to dote upon the personality of the officiant, or merely to receive instruction and to listen to a pious essay.

Perhaps we may find the difference between the ideal of God's House in this Psalm and the various attitudes just mentioned by bearing in mind that the Church teaches the special Presence of God in His House and her people come to meet Him there, whereas the other idea is that of a "God afar off and not a God nigh at hand," and this distant Being is talked about in a special assembly for that purpose. Then again there is that Anglo-Saxon temperament, self-conscious and unimaginative, that does not like any truth that brings God very near, whether in an Incarnation in real human nature and permanently, or in the sacramental Presence which is the extension of His glorified Manhood. Men shut their

eyes and hide from God, instead of having the eyes of their spiritual understanding opened to "behold the King in His beauty."

"So men, by some dark impulse, break the cord
That bound their sires to worship and to faith;
They will not know the terrors of the Lord
Nor bow to all He saith

Of sin and judgment; no, they cannot brook
What seems a mystic saying, or a stern;
And from His Church interpreting His Book
They will not stoop to learn.

And so for solid faith they substitute
A mass of fluid thoughts, but half believed;
And plant the flowers of love, without the root
Of sacred facts received,

Of doctrines strong to heal, amend, uplift;
And finding thus no virtue in a Creed,
They welcome not the all-surpassing gift
Of God made flesh indeed.

And they whose worldly peace would feel a sting
If the Most High were thought to come so near,
May well ignore His Sacraments, that bring
All Heaven about us here."

II. The blessedness of this state consists first and foremost in the fact that such a life is a direct preparation for the life of the world to come, the characteristics of which are adoration and communion in God's unveiled Presence, where worship and service are one, where we are not to hear about God, but to be in the Beatific Vision. And in so far the Church's worship on earth is a foretaste of heaven. See how the two are interwoven with one another in the mind of the Psalmist.

Next we should bear in mind that the perception of spiritual beauty increases as we use God's words, listen to His voice, think of the extension of the Incarnation in the Sacraments and in the mystical Body of which the faithful gathered together are a part. In His House we live in an atmosphere of prayer and love and devotion. Everything is meant to speak of the worthiness, the holiness, the majesty, the beauty of Him Who is King eternal,

immortal, though to us now invisible, "the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely."

It is true also as He has revealed life in His Church that in His House is the meeting place of both worlds. Here we realize the Communion of Saints, or the truth that the common life of all His members is found in His own Life which comes to us in the Sacrament of His Life and Love.

"Ye Saints of God, sweet Jesus' Body glorious,
From Abel to the babe baptized but now,
Ye that in paradise take rest victorious,
Ye that on earth beneath the Cross still bow,
Ye lightning-visaged hosts Angelical
Here at this Holy Feast I meet you all;
For heaven and earth are one in Thee, Lord
Christ,
Therefore I live for Thy dread Eucharist."

III. We must weigh the relative value of worship and practical work, if we are to obtain the beatitude which comes from dwelling in God's House. Practical work has its limitations, personal, in

time, in possibilities, in skill, in results. Worship is forever, has no limit to progress or possibilities, and has results incalculable in uplifting, ennobling, transforming. Moses went up to the mount human; he returned reflecting the Divine Glory.

Work is a discipline, worship a reward. Work is so mixed up with self; worship is the soul forgetting self, rapt in the contemplation of the Holy One. Lacordaire has defined adoration as "the annihilation of self in the presence of a superior Being."

To be occupied in the lowliest position in the earthly courts is to be privileged beyond the highest attainments of human achievement, and this is within the reach of all Christians. No wonder that the Apostle who contemplated work and worship both was "in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better."

V.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF DETACHMENT.

*"Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way:
and walk in the law of the Lord."*

PSALM CXIX. 1.

Let us picture to our minds Him Who was "born of a pure virgin," and Who walked this earth for thirty-three years, amidst wickedness, worldliness and ungodliness, without one stain of sin upon the spotless purity of His human nature.

In this Beatitude from the Psalms we come very close to the Beatitude from the Sermon on the Mount—"Blessed are the pure in heart." Yet the Psalmist is looking at purity as unsullied by contact with surroundings. The standpoint of Christ's Beatitude is that of intrinsic purity. There is the difference emphasized by these two Beatitudes be-

tween comparative and absolute purity. Our Blessed Lord exemplified both. We may be cleansed and so become pure from sin, but how difficult it is to keep that purity unsullied from contact with the surrounding impurity and corruption. S. James paraphrases the words of the Psalm when he says—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this—to keep himself unspotted from the world."

These first words of the Psalm explain why it is called the Psalm of the Saints, "the teacher of the faithful, Paradise of all fruits, storehouse of the Holy Ghost." We can understand with little difficulty why it has been the daily utterance and meditation of those who daily seek the secret of being in the world, but not of the world. It expresses the true spirit of ecclesiastics—"the pure intention to live for God, the zeal for His glory, charity for sinners, the enthusiastic love of the Divine law and the Divine perfections."

I. The state of life indicated is one of order, of ruled restraint and detachment, each characteristic being of a nature calculated to repel evil, to throw off that with which contact is inevitable, but without contamination, like Sir Galahad who sings:

“My strength is as the strength of ten
Because my heart is pure.”

The irregular, sluggish, self indulgent soul is easily at the mercy of venial sin and the corruption of deliberate sin which mar and stain the life.

“How is the gold become dim! How is the fine gold changed!” Venial sin tarnishes, mortal sin intermingles dross. “Take away the dross from the silver and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.”

The Christian life was from the very first described as “the Way” by our Lord and His followers. Day by day we are called upon to walk in that way, but all around are the attractions and

associations of the world. Rule of living, Christ's law, lead us forward. Our surroundings suggest relaxation of rule, transgression of law, making trial to see if God and mammon are irreconcilable. Miserable are those who do not make a supreme act of decision.

Detachment is an attitude which is closely associated with listening to the voice of conscience. There may be great divergence as to the definition of conscience, but we all know how conscience acts and speaks. The "ought" or "ought not" of conscience bids us give up this or refrain from doing that because the danger is that God will be crowded out or put in a secondary place. We reply—"I will not" or "I wish to do it" and refuse to detach ourselves from what conscience tells us is dangerous or forbidden. Then our service of God is no longer wholehearted, our allegiance is divided. Then it becomes more strongly attached to our will and detached from God's Will.

Then we become entangled in a network of conflicting impulses, and try to balance the right and wrong or discover the way out of our perplexity. But conscience is no longer heard, though we would be glad even of its disapproving voice.

“Good-bye! I cried to my conscience,
Good-bye for aye and aye!
And I put her hand off harshly,
And I turned my face away.

And conscience smitten sorely
Returned not from that day—
But a time came when my spirit
Grew weary of its way.

And I cried, ‘Come back, my conscience,
I long to see thy face.’
But conscience said, ‘I cannot!
Remorse sits in my place.’ ”

II. If we should be told that some fearful form of temptation which had pulled us down again and again, which had filled us with horrible thoughts, could never appeal to us again, and would

not present the slightest attraction or charm, would not the sense of relief, the comfort of immunity, be inexpressible happiness? This is the very meaning of the promise of Christ—"If they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them." Did not S. Paul shake off the viper? And does not the tradition of S. John's escape from the poisoned Chalice illustrate the same truth? The peculiar beatitude is that of walking unscathed amidst temptations that are meant by Satan to drag us down, because we have detached ourselves from that which appealed to us, and are walking in the law of the Lord.

Is the price of renunciation, of discipline, of rigid self-repression too great to pay for this state wherein the soul is like a defenced city.

The principle of Lenten setting aside of allowable pleasures is an illustration of this principle of detachment. We choose to put out of our lives for a certain time things quite right and of

some value even which after all are not necessary, lest by not detaching ourselves from them they get such a hold upon us that in the end they do become *practically indispensable to us*. The time was when Friday was treated by earnest Church people as a day with which dances and theatre-going were inconsistent. Now we seem to be rapidly losing that attitude, and the reaction has made its way into Sunday so as to tend to make that day of holy joy nothing but a "week-end" with a diminishing regard for its Eucharistic worship.

III. The way to attain this state of quiet happiness is to search with most anxious determination for the real good, and to distinguish it from the apparent, the immediate, the transitory good. Clearness of vision will come as we look determinedly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He can and will throw light on right action in the homeliest as well as in the deepest matters. At

the same time we learn to discern wherein lies the insidious evil, lurking behind the fancied good.

We may with profit read often the description of the Holy City, as S. John saw it, with its characteristic mark of purity, spotless purity, requiring that those who enter to dwell therein shall be undefiled, shall "have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb." "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth."

VI.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF LOVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOR.

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy."

PSALM XLI. 1.

Again we find a parallel to one of the Gospel Beatitudes—"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." And as with the Gospel law of happiness the reward that shall be given is here set forth—"The Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble."

There are some laws of the Kingdom which are laws of nature lifted up to a higher level by the Incarnation, and this is one. Moreover the relationship between love for God and love for man is a necessary relationship. "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his

compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen?"

Let us represent our Lord in His yearning love for the whole human race—the poor and needy from the sin entailed by the Fall.

I. The state is that of faithfulness to the law of love. A distinct point of interpretation is found in the parallel between the speaker and the Incarnate Son of God in His life upon earth among His enemies, and including His "own familiar friend whom He trusted; who did also eat of His bread." Our Lord came in poverty and need, and some were found who were willingly bound by the law of love, and succoured Him. Such were the household at Bethany, Zacchæus, and Joseph of Arimathea.

Tradition has given us the legendary incidents related of S. Veronica and of the Wandering Jew to illustrate the two

ways in which the acceptance or refusal of this duty work out. For us the "poor and needy" include many besides those in physical distress. We are to include those who are in need of the knowledge of God, of grace, of pardon, the young, the fallen, and the "poorrich."

Then there is that application of the law of love which is so indispensable to those living any sort of common life—in the home, in schools, clergy-houses or convents. The "poor and needy" are often those who need sympathy with their faults and shortcomings as they concern ourselves, and all the forbearance and gentleness that the true disciple of Christ can bring.

Faithfulness to the law of love is wanting where open or secret hostility is cherished in any way—by gesture, tongue, eye, or thought. Judas became a traitor by slow and unnoticed steps, and was a traitor, rather than an enemy, because he continued apparently the "familiar friend."

II. What the beatitude is can be dimly realized by those who have been the conscious objects of Christ's pardoning love, exercised in the Ministry of Reconciliation.

A six-fold reward is promised, in the language of the Psalm. "The Lord shall deliver him"—the reward of eternal life when he shall be delivered from the power of sin, Satan, and death. "The Lord shall preserve him"—the gift of God's prevenient grace which goes before and saves the first steps from error. "And keep him alive"—God's quickening grace, or daily power that invigorates and renews. "That he may be blessed upon earth"—God's consummating grace which deepens and strengthens character. "Deliver not thou him unto the will of his enemies"—protection from our ghostly foe. "The Lord comfort him when he lieth sick upon his bed"—strength at that critical moment, "our last hour."

The great scene which illustrates this

beatitude is the scene at the final Judgment, where the law of love as forming character is decisive. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren ye have done it unto Me." We should read that passage in the twenty-fifth chapter of S. Matthew often and give it the widest spiritual and personal interpretation. It is a vivid setting forth of the Communion of Saints, as members of the One Body, where in the suffering or rejoicing of one all suffer or rejoice in sympathy with him.

III. The road to this blessed state of loving considerateness towards others, to be carefully distinguished from spasmodic, condescending, sentimental acts of generosity, or that kind that is meant to quiet a conscience that accuses of indulgence of self, is the difficult, tiresome road of unselfishness. Only when self is foremost are our judgments harsh and our sympathies blunted. In proportion as we esteem and use our own

privileges do we desire and try to extend those privileges to others. The extension of the Church with her full privileges of Sacraments and Truth to all men is the widest recognition of the poor and needy and it is a recognition that languishes today, excepting perhaps in foreign missions, which is only one department of giving this succour.

The great danger to all of us who have and use the full life of the Church is that we get into a state of self-congratulating orthodoxy, where hypocrisy and pride are ever present dangers. Lazarus lies at our door begging for spiritual crumbs, and we will not let our sons enter the sacred Ministry to relieve the beggar's need.

“‘If I have eaten my morsel alone,’

The patriarch spoke in scorn;

What would he think of the Church, were he
shown

Heathendom, huge, forlorn,

Godless, Christless, with soul unfed,

While the Church's ailment is fulness of bread,

Eating her morsel alone?

'I am debtor alike to the Jew and the Greek,'
The mighty Apostle cried,
Traversing continents souls to seek,
For love of the Crucified.
Centuries, centuries since have sped,
Millions are famishing, we have bread,
Yet we eat our morsel alone.

Ever of them who have larger dower,
Shall Heaven require the more,
Ours is influence, knowledge, power,
Ocean from shore to shore,
And East and West in our ears have said,
'Give us, give us your Living Bread,'
Yet we eat our morsel alone.

'Freely ye have received, so give,'
He bade, Who has given us all;
How shall the soul in us longer live,
Deaf to their starving call,
For whom the Blood of the Lord was shed,
And His Body broken to give them bread,
If we eat our morsel alone?''

VII.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF GODLY FEAR.

"Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord: he hath great delight in His commandments."

PSALM CXII. 1.

The final words of the preceding Psalm are concerning fear—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and we find that the Psalm before us is a setting forth of the happiness of such fear of God.

Let us represent our Blessed Lord, upon Whom in His Humanity the Holy Ghost descended, as exhibiting throughout His earthly life that awe and reverence of the Divine Majesty and that love of the Divine Will which are elements of Holy Fear.

There are four distinct kinds of fear—worldly fear, the attitude of one who is

living without God in the world; servile fear, which looks upon God as a hard taskmaster; "I knew thee because thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown and gathering where thou hast not strawed, and I was afraid"; initial fear, the dread of losing one's soul, so to a certain extent springing from a love of God; and filial fear, or the dread of falling short in any degree of perfect love to God.

Now the Beatitude which we have before us is in reference to one who, having possessed initial fear, has gone on to filial fear, and is experiencing the joy of living and acting from the very highest motive, the perfect love which casts out fear, that is, which banishes all sense of terror and cringing towards the Being Who is Power because He is also known as Mercy, Justice, and Love.

I. This state of filial fear is one of profound consciousness that in the sight of God we are sin and nothingness in ourselves. We have human nature,

soiled as to innocence, degraded as to dignity, though at the same time conscious that we have still the image of God and are capable of being restored to the dignity and estate which will be to His glory.

A sense of all this leads to profound veneration for the Being Who is holy and good, our Creator, and so inculcates adoration and worship. Then there is the profound horror of sin, and the desire from pure love for the Holy God to avoid whatever is contrary to His Will, because antagonism to His Will is the essence of sin.

So, also, as we learn our inability to become better except by His own life given us there results the attitude of dependence upon God in our efforts to please Him and show our love for Him. And these three elements, veneration, dependence, and submission are the characteristics of the fear which the Psalmist describes as blessed.

II. With the attainment of even a

measure of filial fear comes the relief from both worldly and servile fear, these two degrading attitudes which are concerned only with the desire to escape hell. To rest in these alone could not be joy, but anguish of the keenest, because of the feeling that if hell be escaped it will only be by the narrowest margin. Death, from that standpoint, cannot be contemplated excepting with absolute dread. On the other hand the state of filial fear at last leads to the longing in God's good time to escape from that which conditions and mars our perfect love, and death comes to be understood as an actual good, though none the less bitter and humbling, because it is the penalty of sin.

So with the thought of judgment. The joy of filial fear is that of firm assurance that having sought to submit entirely to His Will from desire to please Him, we know that the infirmities of our human nature, the terrible crippling power of sin, will be dealt with according

to Divine insight and mercy, and the verdict will be that of love. While the joy of heaven will lie in the fact that there can be nothing to mar the perfect exercise of love, the joy of growing in that direction will make even the Church on earth a foretaste of heaven.

III. The way to this beatitude now is to strive to live day by day in this spirit of filial fear.

We are called upon to hear God speaking through His Church, His written Word, in the silence of Retreat and Meditation, in the advice from the writings of holy men, in the confessional, in the direction of our spiritual guides, and in the voice of conscience.

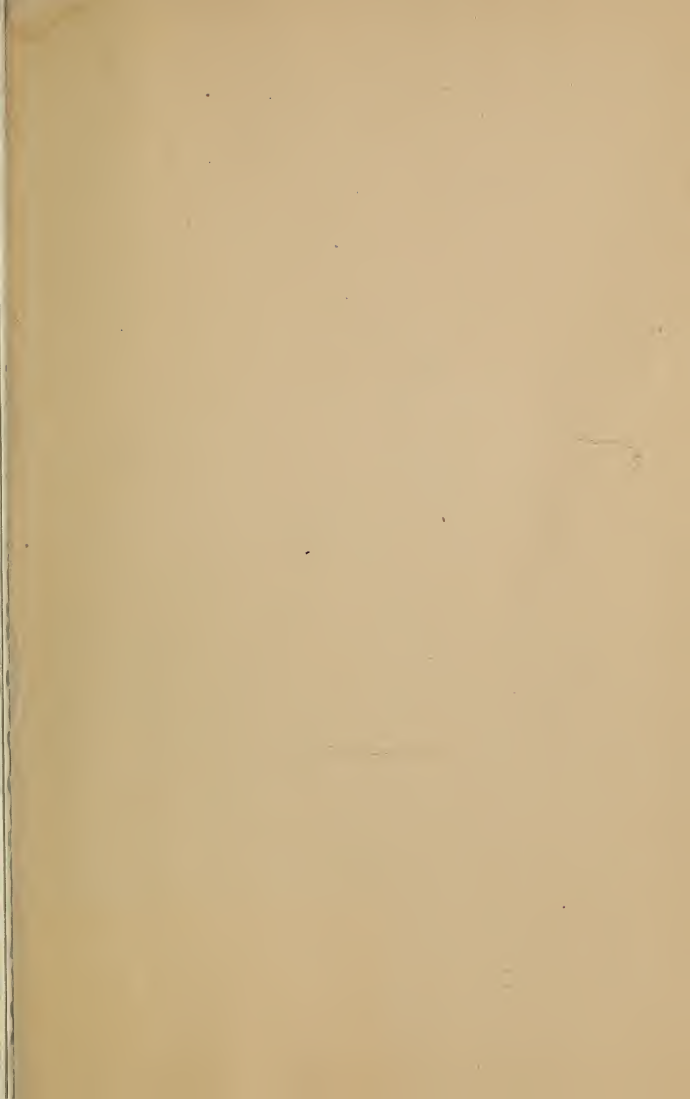
All these are, perhaps, thought of as trite and commonplace methods, and very likely will be treated with questioning, opposition, resentment, disobedience, if only worldly and slavish fear, or even initial fear are the sole foundation, but are full of peace and consolation and interior blessings to those who are

living in the spirit of sons and daughters
of the God Who "loved us and gave
Himself for us" and Who is Perfect Love.

"Then why, O Blessed Jesu Christ
Should I not love Thee well?
Not for the sake of winning heaven
Nor of escaping hell;

Not from the hope of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward;
But as Thyself hast loved me
O ever-loving Lord,

So would I love Thee, dearest Lord,
And in Thy praise will sing;
Solely because Thou art my God,
And my most loving King."



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